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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AS A POLICY FRAME: THE CASE OF THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE FUND IN SCOTLAND

FRASER STEWART, SARAH PARRY, JOSEPH MURPHY

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Fraser Stewart (corresponding author) is a Research Fellow in Science, Technology & Innovation Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Sarah Parry is a Lecturer in Science, Technology & Innovation Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Joseph Murphy is Professor of Environmental Studies in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Glasgow. The research was part of the Sustainable Practices Research Group, funded by the ESRC, DEFRA and Scottish Government (Grant award No: RES-597-25-0003).



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Abstract

As concern about climate change has moved up political agendas, the concept of sustainable community has emerged as one-way societies might respond to the challenge. In Scotland this has been operationalised in the Climate Challenge Fund, a Scottish Government fund designed to financially support communities become more sustainable through local carbon reduction projects. Drawing on recent debates in Policy Studies and Science & Technology Studies related to framing processes, in this paper we ask: how did the goal of sustainable communities become part of the policy agenda? And, how was the idea constituted in particular ways? We suggest that electoral politics matters for shaping shifts in discourse and policy and that in the movement from identification of problems, to the articulation of solutions and the mobilisation of action, a range of options is available as an outcome of the policy process.

Introduction

“The [climate challenge] fund [...] is designed to support innovative and locally-led projects to cut carbon emissions and build sustainable communities.” (Scottish Green Party 2009)

The concept of sustainable communities has emerged to be of interest to policymakers and others contemplating how society might engage with a range of contemporary challenges. Defined as places where “people want to live and work, now and in the future” (HM Government 2005: 56), sustainable communities meet the needs of people living and working in communities in a way that is sensitive to the environment and contributes to a high quality of life. Importantly sustainable communities is about more than just the natural environment; it recognises a range of interrelated issues about the spaces where people are located and how they engage with their surroundings.

Although most actors engaged in policymaking would likely recognise the range of issues that fall within the notion of sustainable community, climate change has grown in recent years to be a dominant concern for societies (Giddens 2009). Whether attention is directed toward domestic energy use, the amounts of waste being generated in the home, making everyday transport choices or protecting and enhancing the natural environment, the principle issue is often articulated in terms of a changing climate. This brings into sharp focus how ordinary everyday activities are perceived as impacting local and global environments, which the concept of sustainable community in particular has surfaced to encapsulate.

In this paper we analyse sustainable communities in public policy by focussing on the Climate Challenge Fund (CCF) in Scotland. As a flagship policy of the Scottish Government, the CCF is designed to support communities in becoming more sustainable by tackling climate change through community carbon reduction projects. Representing one way politics and policy has responded to climate change, the CCF makes normative and functional claims about what community is or ought to be, and the role community might play in mitigating and adapting to a changing climate.

To analyse the CCF we draw on recent debates in Policy Studies and Science & Technology Studies, which emphasise the role of framing in public policy. Emerging from Goffman’s (1974) seminal analysis of framing processes, in which he suggested people make use of frames to make sense of the world, framing describes the way “stories/narratives, metaphors and ‘myths’ get fixed through repetition” (Barr 2006: 26).

It is through these that our perceptions and understandings of the world are shaped. Linking sustainable communities, climate change, the CCF and framing generates the questions that orient this paper: How did the goal of sustainable communities become part of the policy agenda? How was the idea of sustainable communities constituted in particular ways? What are the implications of these for policy?

The paper is structured as follows. In the next section we outline our theoretical framework drawing on recent discussions regarding interpretive policy analysis. Here we position the theory in relation to wider debates in Policy Studies and Science & Technology Studies by focussing on the concept of framing. This is followed by a discussion of the context and setting of the case study to illustrate where the CCF came from and how it has evolved over time. We then present the analysis, illustrating sustainable communities as a policy frame in the CCF and how framing processes have shaped the policy. In doing so we outline what is included and excluded from the policy at a macro level, as well as identifying how frames shift in response to the nuances of the policy process. Finally, we conclude the paper by drawing out the implications of the analysis for policy by explicitly answering the questions posed above.

Framing: Making Sense of Public Issues

Our analytical and methodological framework is guided by the concept of framing. Traceable to Goffman (1974), framing has been described as the way “ordinary people make sense of public issues” (Benford 1994: 1103). In relation to public policy framing provides us with important insights because it is through frames that stories, narratives and metaphors can be seen to influence actors’ perceptions and understandings of the world (Barr 2006). The interpretive approach this implies (Fischer 2003; Hajer & Wagenaar 2003) rejects an orthodox understanding of public policy based on the characteristics and capacities of individual actors or organisations, or indeed any straightforward progress from problem definition to implementing a solution. In doing so, we view the policy process not as a search for objective truths or facts, but rather as a domain of social life reproduced through collective meaning.

Framing In and Out

Characterised by argumentation, conflict and dispute, Laws and Rein (2003) describe the process of framing as “distinguishing between what demands attention and what can be neglected, and of giving stable shape by providing structure, even when that structure cannot be directly observed” (p.174). This draws our attention to discursive storylines (cf. Béland 2005, Fischer 2003, Hajer 1995, Murphy & Levidow 2006), which helps define problems in particular ways, by including and excluding from policy particular forms of evidence, knowledge, expertise and status.

By focussing on the shared elements of a policy frame, weight is added to the view that “language advances certain ideas, prompts certain values, defines certain roles and eventually proposes certain outcomes which shape overall knowledge” (Matthews & Imran 2010: 4). Hajer’s (2005) study of pollution and acid rain as emblematic issues is an illustrative example of this. In this he highlighted metaphors and narratives acting as indicators, signs, and evidence of broader crises in industrial society. Thus Hajer was able to suggest, “discourse seems to matter” (p.299) for determining the set of questions that get proposed.

A further empirical example is Murphy and Levidow's (2006) study on the governance of the transatlantic conflict over agricultural biotechnology. Here it was suggested that it is framing processes that bind together seemingly unconnected and diverse groups of actors involved in public policy (p.25). Frames are not, however, found as whole things residing in any one individual or institution. People articulate discourses of different frames and patch them together; hence it is not unusual to find parts of competing frames turning up unexpectedly as people borrow across them.

Given that a policy frame is only ever one amongst competing alternatives, at the same time as framing "supplies guideposts for analysing and knowing, arguing and acting" (Fischer 2003: 143), they also "exclude" (Yanow 2000: 11). This can result in frame tension or conflict as actors place emphasis on different parts of a policy problem (Gusfield 1981). As a result, frames "mark out the terrain for social exchanges and disagreements" (Surel 2000: 502), which implies that policy change comes about as a result of crises or the dominant frame's inability to manage tension and conflict (Surel 2000: 505). This highlights as significant the way frames compete for advantage (Fischer 2003: 143) as the alternatives jostle for position and influence over policy issues. Though having said that, just as important to the policy process as what gets framed in, is what gets framed out. This involves identifying what is not included in the dominant frame and recognising frame tension and conflict as also shaping policy processes, outcomes and outputs.

Core Framing Tasks

Numerous approaches have been put forward in the literature for understanding framing processes (see Rein & Schön 1996, Fischer 2003, Hajer 1995, Hajer & Wagenaar 2003, Laws & Rein 2003). In this paper we look to Benford and Snow's (2000) discussion of collective action frames in the framing processes of social movements. In particular, we find helpful three core framing tasks – diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing – that together reveal the central elements of a policy frame and the relationship between them. We discuss the most salient aspects of this model in the remainder of this section.

The first core framing task is diagnostic framing. This is related to definition of the problem, identification of its main features and attributing responsibility for it. Rejecting an orthodox notion that policy problems reside outside or beyond the policy process, diagnostic framing is based on an assumption that the problem is to some extent a product of the policy process itself. As a result, this first core framing task is "contingent on identification of the source(s) of causality, blame, and/or culpable agents" (Benford & Snow 2000: 616). This involves defining the main features of the problem and isolating those who should be held to account for it. This does not, however, require the full consensus of policy actors because framing processes make space for multiple views and positions competing over the policy terrain. This suggests only partial agreement or overlap on the nature of the problem needs to be established by relevant actors.

The second core framing task is prognostic framing. This identifies the assumptions actors make about solutions to the problem. Defined as the "plan of attack" (Benford & Snow 2000: 616), prognostic framing describes the tools and objectives considered most appropriate for doing what is required to solve the problem. As such there is an implied rather than determined link between diagnostic and prognostic framing. This is because identification of the problem and attributing responsibility for it will, logically,

limit the range of strategies available as solution. Thus, problem definitions and their solution are political acts often constrained by the policy and politics of the day.

The third core framing task is motivational framing. This emerges as an outcome of diagnostic and prognostic framing and represents “a ‘call to arms’ or rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action” (Benford & Snow 2000: 617). Motivational framing therefore highlights the assumptions policy actors make about how action should be mobilised. Typically these result in a specific nomenclature emerging that stresses the significance and urgency of problems, and the effectiveness and validity of taking action (Jang & Kang 2012: 4). The utility of motivational framing is to provide actors with the “compelling accounts” (Benford & Snow 2000: 617) they require to engage with policy problems.

By focussing on general framing processes and Benford and Snow’s three core framing tasks we are able to build on Rein and Schön’s (1993) suggestion that “framing constitutes social significance of the policy situation, redefines policy problems, and formulates strategies for solving the problem” (p.153). In relation to the CCF we view this as useful for revealing how and in what ways sustainable communities became part of the policy agenda in Scotland, which we will shortly argue has wider implications for policy.

Interpretive Communities in Public Policy

In the previous sub-section we outlined the theoretical framework of the research, next we turn to describing our methodological tools. Located in interpretive policy analysis we view the concept of interpretive community as relevant for understanding how policy frames are shaped.

An interpretive community comprises individual and institutional actors who coalesce around an issue and share an understanding of a policy problem. As such, interpretive community is an analytical category that typically comprises “policy decision-makers, professional experts, academic specialists, policy entrepreneurs, administrators, journalists, state and local officials, and so on” (Fischer 2003: 147). The actors making up an interpretive community can be seen as coming into contact with one another at workshops, events, meetings and conferences. In addition, they interact through the sharing of artefacts through which “meanings are expressed, communicated and interpreted” (Fischer 2003: 149). Examples of these might include policy documents, briefings and peer-reviewed articles.

It is through this interaction that the interpretive community develops a shared understanding of the problem to which solutions are then proposed. This account fits with Toke’s (2005) suggestion that modern policymaking requires the co-operation of a range of stakeholders to build support for outcomes and outputs. Here the policy process is viewed as collaborative and interactive, where power and decisions are negotiated in order to achieve mutual goals and interests.

In our research we employ the concept of interpretive community pragmatically to identify the actors shaping sustainable communities as a policy frame. After consulting background material we classified the interpretive community as comprising individual and institutional actors in four categories (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 – The Interpretive Community

Category of Actor	Institutional & Individual Actors
Politics & Policy	Scottish Government Ministers & Advisors Scottish Government Civil Servants Political Parties & Politicians
Civil Society & Third Sector	CCF Administrator & Grants Panel Charities & Pressure Groups Relevant Think Tanks
Communities & Activists	CCF-funded Communities Environmental Activists Other Communities
Academics & Practitioners	Professional Academics Students & Researchers Sustainability Practitioners

Adopting a case study approach (Yin 2003), our research emphasised the collection and analysis of qualitative data. We designed the study to include a range of actors drawn from across the interpretive community.

Data collection began by scoping the background to the case and identifying relevant documentary material (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 – Summary of Sources of Data

Source of Documents ¹	Interviewees (n=12)	Workshop Participants (n=12)
Government & Parliament	Civil Servants (n=2)	Civil Servants (n=1)
Political Parties	CCF Administrator (n=1)	Environmental Charities (n=1)
Media Coverage	Grants Panel Members (n=3)	Communities (n=3)
Events	Politicians (n=1)	Politicians (n=1)
Think Tanks	PhD Students (n=3)	Academics (n=2)
Civil Society & Activism	Communities (n=1)	PhD Students (n=1)
Academic Literature	Academics (n=1)	Research Team (n=3)

¹ The documents we consulted included: published material, websites, policy briefings, reports, event programmes, press releases, print and broadcast media, and proceedings of parliament

The collected data were analysed by interpreting and categorising the data, which also indicated the actors we aimed to interview. Our participants were drawn from academia, government, politics, the third sector and communities. The interview format was in-depth, semi-structured and flexible. Eleven interviews were conducted face-to-face and two were conducted on the telephone. The final phase of data collection was a half-day workshop with additional participants identified from the earlier fieldwork. A discussion paper based on our preliminary analysis of documentary and interview data was provided in advance. Comprising three sessions of 45-minute discussion, the

workshop explored the notion of sustainable communities being articulated in the CCF and how these have been shaped together in particular ways.

The Climate Challenge Fund

In the previous section we identified the interpretive community and specified our methods of investigation. Next we focus on the case study by describing the development and implementation of the CCF in discreet periods of time that represent particular disjuncture in the policy process (see Appendix 1). This helps us to plot the context within which the CCF emerged, as well as summarise the perspectives of key actors.

Scottish Parliamentary Sessions One and Two (1999-2007): Scottish Labour & Scottish Liberal Democrat Coalition

Following years of public debate and campaigning the Scottish Parliament was established in 1999. Other than specified reserved matters, devolution in Scotland resulted in many day-to-day policy decisions being debated and held to account by the parliament in Edinburgh. Representing a fundamental shift in Scotland's politics, the first elections to the parliament were held in May 1999. These resulted in Scottish Labour and the Scottish Liberal Democrats forming a coalition in the parliament and leading the Scottish Executive. Amongst the early policy and legislative programme were measures related to land and community. For example, the publication of the Land Reform (Scotland) White Paper (1999) and various government funding streams dedicated to environment and sustainability projects indicate the early presence of interest in community-level interventions for delivering policy objectives.

The second session of the Scottish Parliament following the 2003 elections returned Scottish Labour and the Scottish Liberal Democrats to power. This occurred at a time when it was increasingly common to find environmental issues being discussed in terms of justice. Linking the environment with issues of procedural and distributive justice, environmental justice highlights the opportunity for people to have meaningful involvement in decision-making as well as the fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens (see Banzhof 2012). In Scotland it was a very particular form of environmental justice that emerged related to the uneven and unequal distribution of environmental standards and living conditions in Scotland's poorest communities (Dunion 2003: 9-10). Remaining significant throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century (Mittler 2004: 135-6), a number of third sector organisations – such as Friends of the Earth Scotland – bought into this variant of environmental justice.

Nevertheless by the mid-2000s other ideas were emerging with a focus on living with environmental change. Inspired by the work of Rob Hopkins' permaculture students in Kinsale, Ireland, the Transition Town Movement arrived in Scotland in 2005 when it was announced that Portobello in Edinburgh would be the first town in Scotland to implement an Energy Decent Action Plan (<http://www.pedal-porty.org.uk>). Under the moniker 'PEDAL', the Portobello Energy Descent and Land Reform Group aimed to build on earlier success at campaigning against a large superstore opening in their community.

The aim of Transition was to capitalise on community efforts for tackling climate change by working on strategic plans to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Calls for action emerged at this time in particular because, as one member of the CCF Grants Panel we interviewed suggested, "[...] climate change really became much more

apparent, much more of a concern and there was much more pressure to be seen to be doing something around it [...]" (Grants Panel 2). The arrival of Transition in Scotland in the mid-2000s highlights therefore a burgeoning public interest and concern about climate change.

However, having said that, it was the publication of the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change in 2006 that the urgency of climate change was explicitly recognised. The terms of the review were to examine the economic impacts of climate change, the costs of stabilising greenhouse gases and to evaluate the policy challenges of a changing climate. By juxtaposing the costs of taking action with those of not taking action, Stern recognised climate change as market failure and proposed prescriptions for minimising the economic and social costs.

Reflecting widening concern about climate change, all 32 local authorities in Scotland signed up to the Sustainable Scotland Network's (no date) Scottish Climate Change Declaration (<http://climatechange.sustainable-scotland.net>) between January and April 2007. This acknowledged the importance of climate change and made commitments for working in partnership with communities.

It was also in April 2007 that the Scottish Green Party published its manifesto for the forthcoming elections to the Scottish Parliament. This included a pledge to create "[...] a Climate Challenge Fund worth £100million over the next four year term to support community initiatives to reduce carbon emissions" (Scottish Green Party 2007: 15). Building on a commitment to localism, the aim of the CCF proposal was to "[...] get people thinking and acting Green at the all important local level [...]" (Harper & Bridgland 2011: 133). As such, it represented the Scottish Green Party's response to climate change and a perception that government action had up until that point been ineffective or inappropriate for addressing the problem.

In describing the background to the CCF the former Scottish Green Party MSP and Co-convenor, Robin Harper, revealed at our sustainable communities workshop he had been urging communities to get involved in responding to climate change and "[...] don't wait for government to do it [...]". A doctoral student we interviewed expressed a similar view, evaluating the CCF as "[...] reacting to the kind of failings in attempts to govern environmental behaviour [...]" (PhD Student 2). Here the CCF is held as one way environmental challenges could be responded to, something Patrick Harvie (current Co-convenor of the Scottish Green Party) agreed with, adding it was past government failure to act on climate change that was problematic:

"[...] government after government have always found the money for particularly infrastructure projects which make it harder to reach climate change targets and take us farther away from the direction we should be going in [...]"

Elaborating further elsewhere in interview, Harvie also suggested to us that, "[...] it was the empowered bottom-up creative approach that was missing more than anything else [...]". Implicit here is recognition that ineffective government action on climate change could only be addressed by some other approach being taken.

Scottish Parliamentary Session Three (2007-2011): Scottish National Party Minority Control, with Scottish Green Party Co-operation

The elections to the third session of the Scottish Parliament were held in May 2007 resulted in a fundamental shift in the politics of Scotland. With no party in overall control of the parliament, as the largest party, the Scottish National Party (SNP) opened cross-party negotiations in an effort to form an administration. This led to the SNP and Scottish Green Party negotiating a political co-operation agreement (SNP & Scottish Green Party 2007). The result was the Scottish Green Party agreed to support the SNP in return for a number of policy concessions, including finance for the CCF. While the Scottish Green Party manifesto commitment had been for a fund of £100million (Scottish Green Party 2007), the newly re-named Scottish Government agreed to the more modest – but still significant – sum of £18.8million.

Representing a turn away from the justice debates dominant under the previous administration, the CCF saw the influence of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) being reduced and alternatives, including communities, emphasised more. This led to NGOs taking on a new role, not as leaders, but as advisors in a CCF Supporting Alliance. This was a short-lived network of NGOs set up by the Scottish Government to offer advice and support to communities in developing and delivering their CCF projects. However, because the Alliance failed to meet the needs of NGOs and the funded communities it quickly withered¹.

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs launched the CCF in June 2008, who explained the rationale for the fund:

"Climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing us today, both here in Scotland and across the world. We want Scotland to be part of the global solution. There are many things we can do as individuals to reduce our carbon emissions, but by acting and working together as communities we can do much more. [...]" (Lochhead 2008, no page)

This marks out as significant the challenge facing society and the role individuals in communities could play in combating it. In support of the launch the then Acting Director of WWF Scotland was quoted as saying: "[b]y supporting practical action in communities this initiative can make a real contribution towards achieving a low carbon Scotland" (Barlow 2008, no page). Thereby indicating not only the ambitions of the fund, but also how the CCF was broadly being perceived by the third sector.

To illustrate the type and range of activities communities applying to the fund should be demonstrating, four communities – Going Carbon Neutral Stirling, Comrie Development Trust, Barra & Vatersay Community Ltd, and 'PEDAL' in Edinburgh – were identified by civil servants as exemplar projects and funded by the government to continue with their activities. The community focus of the CCF should not be underestimated because, as the Minister for the Environment stated during a parliamentary debate at the time:

"[...] The crucial point is that it is communities that are eligible for the fund. The fund puts resources into the hands of people who know what they want to do and are able to do it [...]" (Russell 2008: no page)

¹ It is notable that the Edinburgh based environmental charity and social enterprise Changeworks stated at our sustainable communities workshop that they perform this supportive role for communities independent of any formal structure such as the CCF Supporting Alliance.

A civil servant we interviewed elaborated further on this, claiming the government wanted “[...] lots of communities and we wanted them to be actively engaged in climate, tackling climate emissions [...]” (Civil Servant 1). This was because community had emerged as a central element in the government’s strategy for reducing carbon emissions. Furthermore, in suggesting to us that “[...] it’s communities from all parts of Scotland, the wealthiest to the poorest, everybody tackling it as a national effort [...]”, the same civil servant also highlighted the scale and reach of the fund as being important.

Nevertheless, while the CCF aimed to assist communities in reducing their carbon emissions, a prevailing view has persisted that (some) communities were “[...] not especially interested in reducing carbon emissions, they’re much more interested in broader rural sustainability questions and community development questions. [...]” (Mid-Career Academic). This indicates on the one hand that the uptake of CCF funding had as much to do with a lack on investment in communities as it did reducing carbon emissions. Though on the other hand, the CCF also offered additional benefits because “[...] Scotland could set an example and thrive if it had strong sustainability measures implemented in both policy and supported by the people [...]” (PhD Student 1). Therefore, regardless of how it manifested in policy, community has remained a central element that accounts for it being threaded throughout the data.

In September 2008 the First Minister of Scotland introduced the Scottish Government’s legislative programme by announcing:

“Climate change is one of the most serious threats we face. Urgent action is needed to cut emissions which cause climate change. ... the cost of inaction will ultimately far outweigh the cost of taking the necessary steps to stabilise our climate. The Climate Change (Scotland) Bill will introduce a target to reduce emissions by 80 per cent by 2050, and a statutory framework to support its delivery, placing Scotland at the forefront of global action on climate change.” (Salmond 2008, no page).

It was therefore into a political environment already sensitive to the climate change debate that the first rounds of CCF funding were announced. This was added to in June 2009 when the Scottish Parliament unanimously passed the Climate Change (Scotland) Act (2009) and the government published the Scottish Climate Change Delivery Plan.

Bringing climate change together with community was considered appropriate because, according to the fund’s Administrator, “[f]rom staying warm (or cool), to travel and what we eat, everything we do impacts on our Carbon Dioxide equivalent emissions, (CO₂e) and therefore climate change” (Keep Scotland Beautiful, no date). This highlights as significant particular views expressed to us by the Chairperson of the CCF Grants Panel:

“[...] [t]here was quite a debate going on about the futility of a lot of the public policy aspects of climate change without adequate engagement of ordinary people in their homes and in their own lives, because of the influence that they could have on each other and therefore help to provide political and commercial space to make progress [...]”

Revealed here is an assumption that while the CCF had emerged in response to climate change, top-down approaches would be inadequate alone. The CCF emerged

as one way behavioural change might be realised by funding community action. In addition, at our sustainable communities workshop other actors uttered phrases that recognised inconsistencies in climate change policies:

“[...] one of the contradictions in this debate is if you relied on that bottom-up voluntary approach, we’re all fried! There needs to be more pace to this and one of the ways of getting more pace into it is by resourcing it in a different way, and the CCF is one way [...]” (Board Member, Comrie Development Trust)

This suggests that while consensus may exist around the need for bottom-up, voluntary approaches for tackling climate change, without state resources supporting action, the carbon emission reductions needed to tackle the problem would not be met.

It has been documented elsewhere that “[a]ttempts to govern climate are nevertheless characterised by deep disagreements” (Webb 2010: 31), however, by 2010 the appropriateness of community responses to climate change had been firmly established. This was because of assumptions about the transformative potential of communities to evoke change. For example, as a Board Member of Fintry Development Trust has been quoted as stating, “[...] when communities start doing something together, it gives people a sense that they can actually achieve something [...]” (Whitelaw 2010, no page). Yet despite evermore activities aimed at tackling climate change being apparent, it was announced in July 2010 that Scotland had missed the first statutory target on greenhouse gas emission reductions contained in the climate change legislation.

It was also around this time that dissenting voices were challenging mainstream views about the nature of the ‘problem’. For other actors, it was suggested that “[t]he problem is not climate change, it is the system driving climate change” (Kenrick 2010, no page). In this contrasting view, climate change as the outcome may be the same, however, the problem was being described in a different way about the material base of developed societies.

The third session of the Scottish Parliament came to an end in Spring 2011 with all the main political parties publishing their manifestos for the forthcoming elections. Published between March and April 2011, the manifestos of Scottish Labour, Scottish Liberal Democrats, Scottish Green Party and the SNP included a commitment to continuing the CCF in the fourth parliamentary session.

Scottish Parliamentary Session Four (2011-2012): SNP majority control

The elections to the fourth session of the Scottish Parliament were held in May 2011. These resulted in the SNP securing the first outright majority in Scotland. In June 2011, Brook Lyndhurst and Ecometrica’s Review of the CCF that the Scottish Government had commissioned was published. This aimed to learn lessons from the successes in community-led climate change projects and to draw conclusions about the impact of the projects. This latter point was particularly relevant because the CCF was described to us by respondents as being built on an assumption that the projects would “[...] have some sort of lasting impact in the community either in continuing itself or just leaving an impact [...]” (Transition Volunteer). The CCF Programme Manager at Keep Scotland Beautiful made a similar point suggesting, “[...] no matter how you look at some of these projects, there’s just so many positive stories coming out of it that helps create

this sense of positivity [...]”. Together these accounts emphasise legacy as an increasingly important aspect of the fund.

The most recent rounds of CCF funding have been made in 2012. In addition, the fourth CCF Gathering was held in Stirling in November 2012. Across the lifespan of the CCF, Keep Scotland Beautiful had organised four Gatherings of CCF-funded communities. At the 2012 meeting the Minister for Environment and Climate Change announced a ‘refresh’ of the CCF “[...] to broaden, to deepen and to explore [...]” (Wheelhouse 2012: 2) the reach and appeal of the fund. A central element of this was to increase the uptake of CCF grants in disadvantaged and hard-to-reach communities. By emphasising “[...] climate justice for all [...]” (Wheelhouse 2012: 3), the change in direction and language used by the Minister is indicative perhaps of justice being brought back into environmental policy-making in Scotland.

In this section we have described in detail the case study by identifying the development and implementation of the CCF in Scottish public policy. Next we begin to answer the questions outlined in the introduction by analysing sustainable communities as a policy frame.

Sustainable Communities as a Policy Frame

In this next part of the paper we analyse sustainable communities as a policy frame. We do this first at a macro level by showing how sustainable communities became part of the policy agenda. This is followed by a fine-grained analysis of the CCF using Benford and Snow’s (2000) core framing tasks to illustrate how sustainable communities have been constituted in particular ways.

The Emergence of Sustainable Communities

In this first part of the analysis we account for how the goal of sustainable communities became part of the policy agenda. To understand how policy problems are understood and acted upon, a framing approach requires us to place policy processes within a wider influencing social and political context. In relation to environment and sustainability the increasing numbers of accidents, incidents and controversies have all acted to raise the awareness of environmental issues with public and policy actors alike. However, it has been the emergence of climate change as posing particular threats to societies that has acted to focus attention. This has institutionalised climate change on a global scale, as evermore legislation and regulation at international, national and sub-national levels has been proposed and implemented.

As policy actors have become more sensitive to the weight of scientific evidence for a changing climate, calls for action have spread amongst academics, policymakers, environmental campaigners, civil society and communities. The sense of frustration expressed by participants in our research at the lack of progress being made by successive governments is therefore telling. As the current Co-convenor of the Scottish Green Party commented, government policies often “[...] make it harder to reach climate change targets [...]”. We suggest therefore that an understanding of framing might offer useful insights. Defined earlier as “distinguishing between what demands attention and what can be neglected” (Laws and Rein 2003: 174), understanding frames involves identifying the ‘glue’ that holds them together. Our analysis indicates the sustainable communities frame being underpinned and held together by the different stories, narratives and metaphors of the actors comprising the interpretive community.

Our research has also provided additional insights into how policy change comes about. A general framing perspective assumes that policy change results when frames are put under pressure, which eventually leads to frame conversion. For Surel (2000), this stems from crises and the dominant frame's inability to manage frame tension and conflict. However, our research points in a different direction, suggesting that frame shifts matter. To elaborate further, in our earlier discussion of the case study we identified environmental justice as a previous dominant frame in Scotland that was replaced by a sustainable communities frame. We attribute this change to events in Scottish politics and policy in the aftermath of the 2007 Scottish Parliament elections. The parliamentary arithmetic following the election meant that the SNP needed to negotiate with other parties in the parliament if they were to form a governing administration. The result was a political cooperation arrangement with the Scottish Green Party, who agreed to support the SNP in return for certain policy concessions, including the CCF.

By recruiting Scottish communities into policy through a process of reframing, brought about by electoral politics, new actors were enrolled into the interpretive community that reduced the influence of existing policy actors, including NGOs. The result was sustainable communities were framed in, environmental justice and NGOs were framed out, and the CCF emerged as a key policy instrument for tackling climate change.

This leads us to ask how frames become stabilised. Our analysis illustrates the importance of shared language for binding actors together in a frame. Respondents in our research were seen to rely on metaphors and narratives to build support for their respective positions. For example, as a community volunteer commented to us, "[...] if you relied on that bottom-up voluntary approach, we'll all be fried! [...]" (Board Member, Comrie Development Trust). Similarly, the CCF Administrator has publicly stated, "[...] everything we do impacts on our carbon dioxide equivalent emissions, and therefore climate change [...]" (Keep Scotland Beautiful, no date). Together these extracts illustrate how actors convey the importance of the issues at stake, requiring urgent action by engaging and empowering communities. Empirically this illuminates Hajer's (2005) suggestion that discursive resources act as indicators and signs for how policy problems are understood and get collectively tackled. Thus, we contend it is still the case that discourse matters for how policy issues are interpreted and solutions proposed – a point we return to in the second part of our analysis.

Collective Action Frames in Practice

In this next part we further analyse sustainable communities as a policy frame. A general framing perspective assumes that policy actors' perceptions of problems are relevant for understanding how they are collectively interpreted and acted upon. Analytically we therefore attend to discourse embedded in the interactions of individual and institutional actors. As ensembles of ideas, concepts and categories, policy discourses can be traced through discursive storylines, which are "linguistic representations of issues that provide ways of holding ideas together and thus enable arguments to be transmitted among stakeholders and networks" (Vigar 2002: 17). Importantly, however, as a "condensed form of narrative" (Hajer 2005: 302), storylines are not totals, they are only ever proxies for how actors understand and engage with a range of policy issues. In what follows we trace sustainable communities as a policy frame by analysing the data using Benford and Snow's (2000) three core framing tasks.

Diagnostic Framing

Earlier we defined diagnostic framing as concerned with problem definitions and attributing responsibility for them. Our analysis for diagnostic framing revealed as significant three contrasting discursive storylines (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Diagnostic Framing – Problems

Actor	Storylines	Discourses
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs & the Environment	"Climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing us today, both here in Scotland and across the world [...]"	Climate change as a lifestyle problem
CCF Grants Panel Member 2	"[...] climate change really became much more apparent, much more of a concern and there was much more pressure to be seen to be doing something around it [...]"	
Mid-career Academic	"[...] they're much more interested in broader rural sustainability questions and community development questions [...]"	A decline in community
Social Scientist & Board Director at 'PEDAL'	"[t]he problem is not climate change, it is the system driving climate change."	Materially based economy & society

Reflecting a view that diagnostic framing is "contingent on identification of the source(s) of causality" (Benford & Snow 2000: 616), our analysis indicated the presence of multiple problem definitions from actors in the interpretive community. The most significant of these emphasised climate change as a problem for societies. Emerging from a particular understanding of climate change being about carbon emissions, the challenge these articulate is related to the unsustainability of modern lifestyles. For instance, by stating that climate change is "[...] one of the biggest challenges facing us today [...]", the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment indicates the ways climate change has moved up the political agenda. This has resulted in consensus forming around the need for policy interventions aimed at curbing the unsustainable trajectory of individuals' lifestyles. For one member of the CCF Grants Panel we interviewed this has resulted in "[...] pressure to be seen to be doing something [...]" (Grants Panel 2). It was into this broader context that sustainable communities were put forward in Scotland as one way climate change could be tackled.

However, while a particular understanding of climate change is an important part of the sustainable communities agenda, our research also uncovered other relevant problem definitions. For example, a Mid-career Academic we interviewed revealed a perception that some of the communities funded by the CCF are "[...] much more interested in broader rural sustainability questions and community development questions [...]". In this account, rather than hold climate change as the central problem, problematised is a perception that community has declined in contemporary society. Significantly, while the CCF represents state investment in communities, this has occurred in a political environment that emphasises austerity and a scarcity of resources. The result has been some communities being viewed as opportunistic in applying for state resources,

even if their primary motivation extends beyond a primary concern for carbon emission reductions.

Other views revealed by our analysis also looked beyond a simplistic view of climate change in defining the problem. For example, one social scientist that is a volunteer board member for a CCF-funded project in Edinburgh has described the problem as “[...] the system driving climate change [...]”. This alternative account recognises the problem in a different way, as systemic, being an outcome of a materially based market economy that has a bearing on the organisation of society. While this more radical explanation differs from other accounts in how the problem is defined, together these highlight the problem being understood and described in multiple ways.

However, diagnostic framing is not just about problem definitions, it is also about apportioning responsibility for them by identifying “culpable agents” (Benford & Snow 2000: 616). Our analysis revealed specific discourses in actors’ accounts that attributed responsibility in particular ways (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Diagnostic Framing – Responsibility

Actor	Storylines	Discourses
Scottish Green Party Co-convenor & MSP	“[...] government after government have always found the money for particular infrastructure projects which make it harder to reach climate change targets [...]”	Government interventions
PhD Student (2)	“[...] reacting to the kind of failings in attempts to govern environmental behaviour [...]”	
Chairperson, CCF Grants Panel	“[...] without adequate engagement of ordinary people in their homes and in their own lives, because of the influence that they could have on each other [...]”	Community action
Minister for the Environment	“[...] it is communities that are eligible for the fund. The fund puts resources into the hands of people who know what they want to do and are able to do it [...]”	

In relation to the role of government interventions, responsibility appeared to be attributed both historically and contemporarily. For example, one storyline focussed on “[...] failings in attempts to govern environmental behaviour [...]” (PhD Student 2). Another emphasised past governments’ policy and legislative programmes always finding resources “[...] for particular infrastructure projects [...]” (Scottish Green Party MSP & Co-convenor). Together these highlight a prevailing view that most culpable for problems has been successive government failure to address pressing environmental concerns, including climate change.

Having said that, other storylines uncovered in our analysis highlighted responsibility for problems residing with communities. For example, dominant in the data were views that attempting to address climate change would be ineffective without directly including people living in communities because of “[...] the influence that they could have on each other [...]” (Chairperson, CCF Grants Panel). Emphasising the transformative potential of communities as collectives was also important in other consulted narratives because communities are held to be the ones “[...] who know what they want to do and are able to do it [...]” (Environment Minister). The consequence of maintaining communities as the most capable of delivering change

suggests, logically, that they are also the most responsible for the problems in the first place.

As a whole our analysis of diagnostic framing therefore reveals contrasting discourses in the interpretive community about the nature of the problem and who should be held to account for it. This adds weight to a suggestion that it is not necessary for all of the actors to agree uniformly on the nature of the problem or indeed who is most culpable for them. Though it is necessary for actors to at least recognise that (real or perceived) problems exist and require remedy. This suggests actors operate pragmatically in the policy process, negotiating contrasting views in an effort to fit together their respective positions.

In this first part of our analysis we have presented evidence for how actors in the interpretive community appear to define the problem and attribute responsibility for those problems. In the next sub-section we extend our analysis to examine the assumptions policy actors' make about how policy problems might be remedied.

Prognostic Framing

We previously defined prognostic framing as being related to the assumptions of policy actors' about solutions to identified problems. Our analysis for prognostic framing revealed two significant discursive storylines (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Prognostic Framing – Solutions

Actor	Storylines	Discourses
Acting Director, WWF Scotland	"[...] By supporting practical action in communities this initiative can make a real contribution towards a achieving a low carbon Scotland."	Politics and policy
First Minister of Scotland	"[...] The Climate Change (Scotland) Bill will introduce ... a statutory framework to support its delivery, placing Scotland at the forefront of global action on climate change."	
Civil Servant (1)	"[...] lots of communities and we wanted them to be actively engaged in climate, tackling climate emissions [...]"	Interventions
PhD Student (1)	"[...] strong sustainability measures implemented in both policy and supported by the people [...]"	

As the "plan of attack" (Benford & Snow 2000: 616) for addressing problems, prognostic framing describes the tools, objectives and strategies considered most appropriate for resolving them. Our research uncovered discursive storylines that illustrate the different types of solutions being put forward by actors in the interpretive community. One set of discourses revealed politics and policy as one route for problems to be addressed. Sustainable communities emerged within a political environment increasingly concerned with climate change. Coupled with the climate change legislation, the CCF exposes the political capital of climate change. Storylines unearthed suggested it is politics and policy that provides the "[...] statutory framework [...]" (First Minister) for activities to occur, which could support "[...] practical action in

communities [...]” (WWF Scotland). These indicate a prevailing view in the interpretive community about political tools and policy interventions being central to combating problems by providing the apparatus that could enable action to take place.

Linked to this suggestion that politics and policy provides the mechanisms for action to occur, other storylines we uncovered emphasised community interventions as specific tools for solving problems. For some actors the focus on community activities was about ordinary people being “[...] actively engaged [...]” (Civil Servant 1) in reducing carbon emissions. Similarly, others articulated the CCF as being about communities coming up with solutions that could implement “[...] strong sustainable measures [...]” (PhD Student 1). Taken together these disclose the assumptions of relevant actors’ about community-level interventions being appropriate tools for addressing problems.

Importantly our analysis also demonstrated a point we made earlier about a link existing between how policy problems are defined and the solutions that get favoured and put forward amongst the competing options. As we have already seen in this research, the problem is being defined in a number of ways. This implies a set of solutions that emphasise particular instruments, including laws and regulations and allocating state resources for encouraging behaviour change in citizens and fostering a renewed sense of community. Significantly, these solutions are constrained by how the problem is being defined and responsibilities attributed in the first place, which in turn limits the strategies and remedies available in response.

In this sub-section we have presented our analysis of prognostic framing as an outcome of how the problem is being defined. As we have shown, this leads to a particular set of solutions being put forward by the actors in the interpretive community. In the next part we develop our analysis further by considering the assumptions actors’ make about how action should be mobilised.

Motivational Framing

We defined motivational framing beforehand as being about the mobilisation of collective action. As the “rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action” (Benford & Snow 2000: 61), motivational framing describes the assumptions policy actors’ make about how action should be encouraged. We identified two discursive storylines as particularly compelling (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Motivational Framing – Action

Actor	Storylines	Discourses
Keep Scotland Beautiful	"From staying warm (or cool), to travel and what we eat, everything we do impacts on our Carbon Dioxide equivalent emissions, (CO ₂ e) and therefore climate change [...]"	Everyday activities
Civil Servant (1)	"[...] it's communities from all parts of Scotland, the wealthiest to the poorest, everybody tackling it as a national effort [...]"	
First Minister of Scotland	"Climate change is one of the most serious threats we face. Urgent action is needed to cut emissions which cause climate change [...]"	Urgent action
Board Director, Comrie Development Trust	"[...] is if you relied on that bottom-up voluntary approach, we're all fried! There needs to be more pace to this [...]"	

The discursive storylines uncovered in our analysis highlight how actors in the interpretive community attempt to stimulate action. Importantly, this occurs as a direct response to how policy problems are defined and their solutions proposed. One set of storylines stressed the significance of everyday activities as contributing to climate change. For example, the CCF Administrator's assertion that "[...] everything we do impacts on our carbon dioxide equivalent emissions [...]", illustrates the way climate change is placed at the centre of the problematic. Similarly, by declaring the CCF is about "[...] everybody tackling it as a national effort [...]" (Civil Servant 1), a view is revealed about the scale of the challenge and how ordinary people should be encouraged to take action locally in reducing their carbon emissions.

In addition to signalling the issues as significant, other storylines in our analysis pointed toward action being encouraged through the use of particular language that emphasises the urgency of the issues. For instance, linguistic utterances such as "[u]rgent action is needed to cut emissions [...]" (First Minister of Scotland) emerge as typical of how actors in the interpretive community attempt to mobilise action. However, we did not only find high profile public figures using language in this way. For example, by suggesting that "[...] there needs to be more pace to this [...]" (Board Member, Comrie Development Trust), a community volunteer we spoke to also makes the case for urgent action being required for addressing climate change.

Analytically our research therefore indicates the ways in which discourse is used to motivate and elicit action as an outcome of how issues are framed in particular ways. This is what Benford and Snow (2000) referred to as "vocabularies of motive" (p.617). Despite an outward appearance of sustainable communities being about collective action, there remains within the CCF a dominant focus on individuals. However, it is individual action placed within a collective context. Nonetheless, by stressing the significance and urgency of problems, our analysis suggests that it is framing processes that equip actors with the compelling accounts they require for engaging in collective action.

In much the same way as we established a link between how problems are defined and solutions put forward amongst competing options, our research also provides

empirical support for a view that it is how problems are defined and their solution articulated that influences views about how action should be mobilised. By attending to the discourses embedded in the interactions of individual and institutional actors, our analysis has revealed discursive storylines that assume community-level action in reducing carbon emissions will be required to change behaviour collectively. It is motivational framing that enables this to happen by enrolling actors in to the policy process as complicit parties who are, by implication, considered the best placed to take remedial action for resolving problems.

In this sub-section we have analysed the case study for motivational framing, which identifies the assumptions of policy actors in the interpretive community about how action should be mobilised. Using Benford and Snow's (2000) core framing tasks our analytical discussion has examined sustainable communities as a policy frame to reveal how problem definitions shape the solutions and the actions that get put forward. In the next and final section we conclude the paper by explicitly answering the questions we set out in the introduction.

Conclusion

In this paper we have analysed sustainable communities as a policy frame in Scotland. This has been an attempt to answer two key questions: how did the goal of sustainable communities become part of the policy agenda? And, how was the idea of sustainable communities constituted in particular ways? In this final section we conclude the paper by answering these two questions, as well as considering a third: what are the implications of the research for policy?

Beginning with the CCF in Scotland as the case study we situated our research in a wider social and political context of growing concern about climate change. As a flagship policy of the Scottish Government, the CCF was designed to support communities become more sustainable by tackling climate change through local carbon reduction projects. Making normative and functional claims about what community is or ought to be, and the role communities might play in mitigating and adapting to climate change, the CCF can be understood as a political response to pressing environmental challenges.

The first question we aimed to answer was: how did the goal of sustainable communities become part of the policy agenda? Our analysis has shown the significance of electoral politics in bringing about a radical frame shift. Whereas pre-2007, the environmental justice frame was important in orienting thinking within Scottish politics, post-2007 this was largely replaced by sustainable communities as a frame. Importantly, the new personnel involved in government (the SNP/Scottish Green Party cooperation agreement) forged new partnerships and relationships resulting in sustainable communities being put forward as one way climate change could be tackled. By plotting shifts in discourse and the personnel shaping the interpretive community, we have been able to recognise the transformative role of actors coming together to collectively tackle pressing policy problems, which led to radical policy change in Scotland.

In light of this, the second question we aimed to answer was: how was the idea of sustainable communities constituted in particular ways? Using Benford and Snow's (2000) core framing tasks, our analysis enabled us to account for what is in the dominant frame. By providing a nuanced understanding of framing processes, this has helped us build on Rein and Schön's (1996) suggestion that "framing constitutes the

social significance of the policy situation, redefines the problem and reformulates strategies for solving the problem” (p.153). Significantly, our analysis has provided insight into the way multiple definitions of the problem can exist, which can lead to a range of possible solutions being proposed and, consequently, numerous strategies for action put forward. These ‘multiples’ can and often do lead to frame tension and conflict, which reveals frames as not concrete things, but rather dynamic and flexible entities bounded by policy processes. In refining interpretive theory, our research therefore allows us to conclude that in the movement from identification of problems to articulation of solutions and the mobilisation of action, a range of options are available that is an implied outcome of policy processes.

In answering these two substantive conclusions we finish by considering a third: what are the implications of the research for policy? Given that our analysis has shown there are always multiple framings of a problem, and solutions and action are therefore an outcome of the policy process, one implication for policy is that a diverse range of actors with different ideas, perspectives and experiences are available to be involved in policymaking that extends beyond politicians and civil servants. These can include – but are not limited to – academics, business leaders, civil society organisations or the third sector.

Understanding the different contributions a variety of actors like these might make to policy processes opens up alternative ways for pressing problems to be understood and tackled collectively. This is because including a wide range of actors in policy processes might aid reflexivity by rendering visible the processes of framing (diagnostic, prognostic and motivational) and the types of action embedded therein. Our analysis therefore provides additional evidence supporting a recommendation made by Parry and Murphy (in press) that enhancing reflexivity in the policy process can also be used instrumentally to encourage policy change. As we have seen in this research, this can occur by creating the conditions whereby dominant frames can be modified or replaced by framing issues and challenges in different ways by identifying alternative problems and solutions.

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Appendix 1 - Timeline of the CCF (1999-2012)

Year	Month	Event
<i>Pre-1999</i>		<i>Debates leading up to the formation of the Scottish Parliament</i>
Scottish Parliamentary Sessions One & Two (1999-2007): Labour & Scottish Liberal Democrat Coalition		
1999	May	Scottish Parliament Election (SL & SLD control)
1999	July	Land Reform (Scotland) White Paper published
2003	May	Scottish Parliament Election (SL & SLD control)
2005		Portobello in Edinburgh becomes Scotland's first transition town
2006	October	Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change published by HM Treasury
2007	April	Scotland's Climate Change Declaration signed by all 32 local authorities
2007	April	SGP manifesto for SP elections published, which includes the CCF as a key policy
Scottish Parliamentary Session Three (2007-2011): Scottish National Party minority control, supported by Scottish Green Party		
2007	May	Scottish Parliament Election (SNP minority control, supported by SGP)
2007	May	Renamed Scottish Government announces five new Strategic Objectives
2007	November	Scottish Budget Spending Review, includes funding for the CCF
2008	June	CCF launched by Cabinet Secretary and opens for first applications
2008	September	CCF round 1 announced
2008	November	CCF round 2 announced
2009	January	CCF round 3 announced
2009	April	CCF round 4 announced
2009	June	Climate Change (Scotland) Act (2009) unanimously passed by Scottish Parliament
2009	June	Climate Change Delivery Plan published by Scottish Government
2009	September	CCF round 5 announced
2009	September	First CCF Gathering of CCF funded community groups organised by Keep Scotland Beautiful (KSB)
2009	December	Climate Change Adaptation Framework published by Scottish Government
2009	December	CCF round 6 announced
2010	March	CCF round 7 (tranche 1) announced
2010	May	Second CCF Gathering of CCF funded community groups organised by KSB
2010	June	CCF round 7 (tranche 2) announced
2010	July	Scotland misses first statutory targets on gas emissions in the climate change legislation
2011	March	Sustainable Development Commission closes
2011	March	CCF round 8 announced
2011	March	SL manifesto for Scottish Parliament Elections is published & includes the CCF
2011	April	SGP, SNP & SLD manifestos for Scottish Parliament Elections are published & all include the CCF
2011-Present: Scottish National Party majority controls Scottish Parliamentary Session 4		
2011	May	Scottish Parliament Elections (SNP win with first ever majority in the Scottish Parliament)
2011	June	CCF Review by Brook Lyndhurst & Ecometrica published by Scottish Government
2011	September	The Scottish Budget Spending Review - includes commitment to funding the CCF until 2015
2011	November	Third CCF Gathering of CCF funded community groups organised by KSB
2012	March	CCF round 9 announced
2012	June	CCF round 10 announced
2012	August	CCF round 11 announced
2012	November	Fourth CCF Gathering of CCF funded community groups organised by KSB
2012	November	Minister for Environment & Climate Change announces refresh of the CCF
2012	November	CCF round 12 announced